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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

15 March 1968

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Yugoslav Official to Discuss Vietnam in India

Ales Bebler, president of the World Federation of UN Associations and a member of the Rann of Kutch tribunal, is in India as Tito's personal assistant on Vietnam,

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COMMENT: Since September, Bebler has been working for a five nation conference in Geneva which has been attempting to find ways to start negotiations on a Vietnam settlement. Bebler's latest proposal is that the US indefinitely halt the bombing of North Vietnam on the opening day of the conference. Bebler may have sold Tito on the usefulness of this approach, hence the trip to India,

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Bebler's proposal thus may foreshadow the approach Tito will take in dealing with the Vietnam problem at a nonaligned conference.

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Yugoslav-Bulgarian Feud Over Macedonia Continues

Another criticism of Bulgarian propaganda on Macedonia has appeared in the 13 March issue of the Yugoslav daily Nova Makedonija. The newspaper attacks several articles in the latest issue of the Bulgarian periodical Slavyani for presenting events in Macedonian history as Bulgarian history and for calling the Macedonian language merely a local dialect of Bulgarian.

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COMMENT: Yugoslav criticism of Bulgarian views on Macedonia dropped off after the celebration in Sofia of the 90th anniversary of the San Stefano treaty on 3 March. However, the Yugoslavs apparently are unwilling to let the matter die and the Bulgarians unwilling to stop publicizing their denial of the existence of a separate Macedonian nationality.

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Eastern Europe Exempt From Export-Import Bank Act

Six Eastern European countries have been exempted from the Export-Import Bank Act which was signed into law by President Johnson on 13 March. The Fino amendment to this law forbids the extension of foreign trade credits to any country whose government directly furnishes goods, supplies, military assistance or advisors to North Vietnam. The State Department has notified its posts in Belgrade, Sofia, Bucharest, Budapest, Warsaw and Prague that the law is not applicable to their respective host countries at this time.

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COMMENT: With the exception of Yugoslavia, whose aid has been channeled through private organizations such as its Red Cross, all Eastern European countries come within the terms of the law. Applied to the letter, the law would have created a serious obstacle to the US bridgebuilding policy toward Eastern Europe. Eastern European assistance to North Vietnam is not extensive, especially military aid, and it is undoubtedly wiser to keep as many options open as possible at a time when many Eastern Europeans are searching for alternatives to continued economic dependence on the USSR.

Yugoslav Party Chieftan Undergoes Rest Cure

Vladimir Bakaric, head of the Croatian Communist Party, has been conspicuously absent from several recent important political events, including the festivities connected with Tito's brief visit to Zagreb on 17-21 February.

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COMMENT: Bakaric has suffered from serious health problems for many years and his prolonged absence from the political scene may be fully justified on those grounds. However, if he fails to join Tito in attendance at the 20 March conference of the Zagreb party to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Tito's election as head of the city party unit, this may reflect a more serious deterioration in his health than now suspected.

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U.S. Defector's Yugoslav T.V. Appearance a Bust

Timhomir Momirovic's television appearance did not fulfill the regime's expectations. Momirovic is the U.S. serviceman who deserted to Yugoslavia while on emergency leave from Vietnam in late February [redacted]. The party daily, Borba, admitted Momirovic was no hero and noted the reason he deserted was not political but "simply to save his life." The Politika Ekspres, an afternoon tabloid, was specifically critical of the show, stating that a chance to give first-hand information about this "unusually dirty war" was "probably not fully used." [redacted]

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COMMENT: According to our embassy in Belgrade, the details given by Momirovic "failed to live up to the lurid picture of US crimes in Vietnam which are standard in the Yugoslav press." The embassy also noted that Momirovic's personality ... apparently evoked little sympathy among Yugoslavs, who seem ready to consider him a coward or a dupe.

Bulgarian Media Remain Silent On Polish and Czech Developments

The Bulgarian information media have continued their silence on recent Polish and Czech developments, according to the US embassy in Sofia. In addition, Czech and Polish newspapers which appear regularly on Sofia's newstands are not now available. [redacted]

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COMMENT: The convening of a special meeting of Bulgarian security officials who were addressed by party leader Todor Zhivkov on 13 March is another indication of Bulgarian apprehension toward current developments in Eastern Europe. The striking similarity between the careers and temperament of Novotny and Zhivkov and the admitted restlessness of Bulgaria's youth undoubtedly are behind Sofia's uneasiness.

NOTE: THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE REPRESENT
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